

# Church Leaders Statement

The National Church Leaders' Consultation (NCLC) gathering at OR Tambo International Airport from the 22-23<sup>th</sup> October 2014, reflected on being the Church in South Africa today, and the national challenges South Africans face as we celebrate 20 years of democracy. In this regard the meeting declared:

We speak to the churches and to the leadership of South Africa.

As church leaders we worship and honor the triune God who calls us to advance inalienable dignity for all people and creatures. We are therefore committed to a life of healing of all people and creatures; a life of reconciling justice; a life of equality-seeking freedom.

We are Christ's servants in South Africa and are committed to a united ecumenical witness and action. We treasure the interreligious dialogue and cooperation in South Africa, where religion can sometimes be misused to fuel conflict.

As church leaders we confess to the brokenness and pain of our society – we have a crisis of hope and an urgency to respond. We have seen and heard the plight of the poor. We confess that we were not conduits of creating a just and peaceful society. We should speak boldly about the challenges and issues confronting us.

We are grateful that South Africa is now a constitutional democracy that have changed our country fundamentally. We are also grateful for many positive changes and programmes that have given more citizens access to basic services, improvement of opportunities and restoring our international standing.

At the same time we are experiencing serious challenges in a number of areas: a large portion of our citizens are still living in poverty and are unemployed; the challenges of crime, corruption and fraud; the violence against women and children; etc. Reflecting on these challenges, the meeting

## 1. Reflected on our political culture after 20 years of democracy:

- 1.1 Cautioned against romanticizing democracy against the very real backdrop of the vast majority of black South Africans still experiencing the pain, suffering and exclusion of being trapped in poverty and inequality. The much vaunted rainbow-nation now has shades of grey – reflecting the social evils we are producing.
- 1.2 Warned of the danger of the deliberate weakening our constitutional principles and values – even if parliamentary procedures are followed – to avoid accountability, transparency and leadership that serves the people, rather than political and other elites in society.
- 1.3 The meeting urged South Africans to, through active citizenship, give life and meaning to the constitution as the embodiment of our democracy. In this regard, the meeting strongly emphasized the need to defend the Public Protector and her office against the political onslaught they are experiencing in the wake of amongst others, the “Nkandla-gate” scandal.

## 2. Reflected on The National Development Plan 2030

We want to critically engage, through dialogue with all sectors on the following aspects and challenges in the NDP. In this regard we resolved to broaden the NRASD working committee to give effect to active engagement with the NDP, NPC and government.

2.1 The meaning and value of active citizenship and partnerships between different sectors – which forms the basis of the NDP. The role of faith networks, civil society, business, etc. in the implementation of the NDP – to ensure that benefits should reach local communities.

2.2 The serious concern about education:

2.2.1 The delivery and output in especially in basic education. The meeting resolved to continue working with all stake holders (government, unions, civil society, etc.) to bring about the necessary change. As part of this, the meeting decided to engage with the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and other role players as a matter of urgency.

2.2.1 The importance of Early Childhood Development (ECD) - in all the aspects of education, health services, nutrition, etc.

- 2.3 Social and welfare policy: the crisis of the current underfunding of social welfare services delivered by faith networks and NGOs in South Africa.
- 2.4 Energy and ecology: concern about the current energy policy – nuclear energy and fracking are not environmentally responsible and may destroy the living chances of future generations.
- 2.5 The importance of food security and land redistribution and use in South Africa.
- 2.6 Health: Strengthening primary health care through partnerships:
- 2.6.1 Seeking new and innovative ways of cooperation between different sectors to address shortage of medical staff (doctors and nurses) in South Africa, to improve access to healthcare;
- 2.6.2 Supporting primary healthcare through the Health Literacy Programme (with Medical Faculty, Pretoria University, and Department of Health) – to promote and advance healthy lifestyles.
- 2.7 Bodies of South Africans that died in Nigeria: commended the efforts of the South African government to ensure that the remains of the people that died in the collapse of the guesthouse attached to the Synagogue Church of All Nations, are transferred to South Africa and their families. However it remains important that pressure be kept on the Nigerian authorities to speed up the process.
- 2.8 Ebola outbreak: appreciates South Africa's response to assist, and appeals to the regional and international communities to faster mobilize more resources (finance and staff) to fight the disease – that affects all of humanity. It warns against the stigmatization of patients – especially those living in the affected areas.
- 2.9 Postal strike: expresses its deep concern about the crisis in a national service that mostly affects the poor, the elderly and students – apart from the damage to the economy. The lack of responsible and prudent leadership in this state entity (and others), are of great concern – not only are essential services disrupted, but scarce funding that could have been used to fight poverty are lost in this way. We urge government to do what is necessary to resolve this crisis.
3. Reflected on the HIV and Aids challenge, sexual and Gender-based violence:  
 Speaker: Dr Erasmus Morah – Executive Director of UNAIDS: commended South Africa for doing well in treatment roll-out, but danger of complacency: new infections of approx. 460 000 per year reminds us that prevention programmes are not effective. He also posed the challenge to engage with some practices of faith healings that are detrimental to medical treatment. Important challenge: ensuring access of civil society networks to funding to continue their work on grassroots level.

### **Participating leaders**

1. Archbishop Dr. Thabo Makgoba – Anglican Church of Southern Africa; Chairperson of NCLC
2. Archbishop Dr. Zandisile Magxwalisa – Jerusalem Church in South Africa
3. Rev. Mukondeleli Ramulondi – Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa
4. The Most Revd Bishop Lunga ka Siboto – Ethiopian Episcopal Church
5. Bishop Ziphozihle Siwa – Methodist Church of Southern Africa / SACC
6. Bishop Nkosekhaya Dikana – Word of Life
7. Bishop Sonwabo Dlula - RAMSA
8. Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana – Ethiopian Episcopal Church / SACC
9. Prof. Nico Koopman – Faculty of Theology – Stellenbosch University
10. Bishop Melumzi Norhushu – Ebenezer Christian Church
11. Rev. Gosekwang Seane – Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa
12. Prof Mary-Anne Plaatjies Van Huffel – Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa
13. Rev. Mzukisi Faleni – Presbyterian Church of Africa
14. Rev. Buhle Mkiva – RAMSA
15. Dr. Donald Katts – Volkskerk van Afrika
16. Dr. Frank Chikane – AFM International / SACC
17. Dr. Renier Koegelenberg – EFSA/ NRASD
18. Prof. Welile Mazamisa – EFSA/NRASD
19. Rev. Lungile Mpetsheni – Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa

20. Rev. Mkhuseleli Dukwana – Presbyterian Church of Africa
21. Rev. Vuyani Nyobole – Methodist Church of Southern Africa
22. Rev. Willie Van Der Merwe – Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa
23. Rev. Charmaine Morgan – Methodist Church of Southern Africa
24. Rev. Moss Ntsha – The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa
25. Rev. Canon Desmond Lambrechts – Anglican Church of Southern Africa
26. Pastor. Hermy Damons – International Federation of Christian Churches
27. Rev. Senamo Molisiwa – CAIC
28. Rev. Horst Muller - Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa
29. Rev. Luvuyo Makalima – Baptist (Calvinist)
30. Pastor Xola Skosana – Way of Life
31. Mr. Marcus Van Wyk – SACLI
32. Mr. Miles Giljam – SACLI
33. Mr. Henry Jeffreys – Journalist and analyst
34. Endorsed by the South African Council of Churches (and the National Executive Council of SACC) and Church Leaders' Forum (CLF)